CAVERN OF THE SKY REAPER

Let me tell you the tale of how the world broke. We once had cities that scraped the sky, oceans that shimmered blue, and life aplenty. Then came the Great Shattering—a darkness from the sky or a fire from below, no one rightly remembers. The land cracked, the waters boiled, and what was left turned to poison. Nations bled dry in wars for dwindling scraps. The strong took what they could; the weak became bones in the dust. Now, only the wastelands remain—a sun-blasted hell where mutants roam and law is a dead man's whisper.

In this broken age, warlords reign. They carve their dominions with rusted steel and bitter cruelty, ruling over scavengers and slaves. High above the ruin, on a crumbling mesa, the Sky Reaper holds court. He and his tribe are vultures with wings of tattered canvas and twisted metal. From the caverns, they swoop like shadows on hang gliders, preying on any who dare cross the Dust Road below. Their home is unreachable save by air, their blades always sharp, their eyes forever watching. They rule by terror, taking what they want and leaving only echoes behind.

This is the world now: a land of broken dreams, ruled by beasts in human skins, where every dawn might be your last. Remember this, wanderer, if you ever dare the road that leads to the Sky Reaper's lair. The wind carries death in these parts, and mercy is just another word for weakness.

ADVENTURE LEVEL

This **Fifth Edition/Black Flag Roleplaying**-compatible adventure is designed for three to five players with an average party level (APL) of 1. However, you may scale the adventure to fit parties of 2nd to 10th level using the Encounter and Treasure tables included throughout the document.

CAVERN OF THE SKY REAPER ADVENTURE HOOK

D8	HOOK
1	The Hidden Map Fragment: The medallion map found within the caverns is only one piece of a larger puzzle. Rumors suggest that the remaining fragments are scattered among rival warlords and buried in forgotten ruins. Assembling the complete map could lead to a long-lost vault containing pre-apocalyptic technology or a powerful weapon.
2	The Wounded Dust Vulture: A former member of the Dust Vultures, gravely injured and left behind, knows valuable secrets about hidden stashes and safe routes through the badlands. However, they only agree to share this information if the characters can ensure their survival and escort them to a distant settlement.
3	The Sky Reaper's Heir: Among the freed captives is a child secretly fathered by the Sky Reaper. Now orphaned, the child could be a potential target for rival gangs who wish to use them as leverage to claim the Sky Reaper's old territory or to seek revenge. The characters must decide whether to protect the child or hand them over to a safer yet unknown fate.
4	The Cursed Sword: One of the weapons found in the treasure chamber is more than it seems. The blade is haunted by the spirit of a fallen warrior who was wronged by the Sky Reaper and his crew. The spirit seeks vengeance, but its wrath could easily be turned against those who wield the weapon unwisely.
5	The Mysterious Tome: Hidden among the bookshelves is a crumbling tome written in an obscure language. It details rituals and forgotten knowledge from before the world broke, including information on summoning ancient creatures or contacting lost spirits. However, deciphering it could bring unwanted attention from powerful entities or rival factions seeking the same secrets.
6	The Pact of the Vultures: Before the Sky Reaper's fall, he was in negotiations with a nearby warlord for a sinister alliance. With the Reaper gone, this warlord may seek out the characters, either to strike a new deal or to eliminate those who disrupted their plans.
7	The Whispering Cavern: One tunnel deep within the caverns is said to be haunted. The Dust Vultures avoided it out of fear, believing it to be cursed. Voices echo from its depths, promising hidden riches in exchange for disturbing whatever restless spirits dwell there—or perhaps it's a trap laid by something far more sinister.
8	The Sky Reaper's Banner: The gang's symbol, a ragged banner sewn from tattered flags and scavenged cloth, is highly prized among other raiders. Possessing it marks you as a victor over the Dust Vultures but also makes you a target for those seeking to claim the Sky Reaper's legacy for themselves. Warlords, scavenger bands, and even potential allies all have different opinions on how to treat those who carry the banner.

CONTENT WARNING

This adventure contains themes that, while not explicitly described, suggest elements of enslavement and violence. The narrative includes scenes involving captives held against their will, vulnerable characters, and coercion. Please approach this material with care and ensure that it is suitable for your group. As always, consider discussing any potential sensitivities with your players before running the adventure.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is designed to be used as a one-shot or placed into an ongoing campaign. You may use it as a random encounter for characters while they travel through a dense forest. Alternatively, the **Cavern of the Sky Reaper Adventure Hook** table offers quest goals that will have the characters seek the forest out.

CAVERN OF THE SKY REAPER

The top of the mesa is a haunting graveyard of the world that was. Crumbling remnants of old civilization dot the cracked, dusty surface—broken walls, rusted beams, and shattered concrete overtaken by thorny brush. In the center, an ancient building's roof has collapsed, leaving a yawning hole that leads directly into the Sky Reaper's cavern below. This passage serves as both entrance and deathtrap, guarded fiercely by lookouts and pitfall traps.

On the mesa's eastern cliff, a gaping maw has been carved into the rock. This is the launch point for the Dust Vultures, where they take to the skies on their hang gliders. Ropes and makeshift ladders dangle from this point, swaying in the wind, allowing them to climb back after a raid. Below, the badlands stretch out like a wasteland tapestry—a barren landscape of cracked earth and twisted canyons. An old highway, blackened and broken, slices through this desolation, its once smooth asphalt now a jagged path for scavengers and the desperate.

From this vantage, the Dust Vultures watch all who dare approach. The mesa is more than their home—it is a fortress, a perch from which they reign as lords of ruin and terror, with the badlands spread out beneath them like a kingdom of ash.

APPROACHING THE MESA

Approaching the mesa is a daunting task. The terrain surrounding it is unforgiving—a stretch of rocky desert where even the slightest movement catches the eye. With little cover and the relentless sun baking the land, anyone attempting to close the distance must contend with the ever-watchful Dust Vultures who patrol the skies. These sentinels sweep the area regularly, keen eyes searching for movement, and their vantage point gives them a near-perfect view of the badlands below. Even at a distance, the screech of their hang gliders warns of their approach.

Potential approaches are listed below.

Running the Gauntlet

This method is the most direct and dangerous. Characters would need to drive or sprint across open ground, fully exposed to the Vultures' watchful gaze. Success relies on sheer speed, but even then, evading the gliders and potential ambushes would be a near-impossible feat.

During the day, the Dust Vultures command a near-unbroken view of the surrounding wasteland. From their perch atop the mesa, they can see up to three miles in all directions, especially across the flat, open desert. The sunlit expanse offers little in the way of natural cover, making any movement glaringly obvious against the rocky ground. Heat haze might blur the horizon, but within a mile, their sight is sharp and relentless.

Anything that crosses this sun-scorched zone—be it travelers, scavengers, or beasts—is quickly noticed, especially as the light reflects off metal or other bright surfaces. The Dust Vultures have grown adept at spotting even the smallest disturbances in the landscape: a trail of dust, the flash of movement, or the glint of steel. Crossing the badlands in daylight without being seen is almost impossible, requiring more than just luck—it demands true cunning or a daring plan.

The map of the badlands surrounding the mesa shows the Vulture's line of sight. If the characters approach the fortress on foot, the Vultures will see them unless they are camouflaged. Even camouflaged, every 10

minutes of travel across the badlands will require them to succeed on a DC 12 group DEX (Stealth) check—all characters make the check; if less than half succeed, they are spotted. The DC increases to 15 when they are within 1 mile of the mesa and again to 17 when they are within 100 feet of it.

The old highway provides some broken cover in the form of rusted wreckage and crumbling overpasses. Characters could use this debris to stay out of sight and approach cautiously, relying on timing to avoid aerial patrols. Doing so grants them a +2 bonus to all DEX (Stealth) checks made to approach unseen.

Once spotted, the Sky Reaper sends a group of four **Dust Vultures** (see the Appendix) to confront the characters. Another four **Dust Vultures** join the battle if the characters are within 1 mile of the mesa. Then, once the characters are within 100 feet of the mesa, **Dust Vulture Riflemen** stand at the entrance and fire down at the character from the safety of the caverns (see Area 2).

Sneaking in at Night

Under cover of darkness, the badlands offer slightly more concealment. While the Dust Vultures still maintain night patrols, their visibility is limited. Characters could use the natural shadows of rocks and ruins to inch closer, but they must still avoid stumbling into hidden pitfalls or triggering makeshift alarms set by the Vultures.

Sneaking in at night is similar to sneaking in during the day, except the DC for the group DEX (Stealth) check is 8 at the edge of the Vulture's line-of-sight, 10 within 1 mile, and 12 within 100 feet. Unless a light source illuminates the characters, the dim light makes it hard for the riflemen in the caverns to see them, imposing disadvantage on their ranged attack rolls.

Using a Distraction

Creating a large enough disturbance elsewhere could divert the Dust Vultures temporarily, giving the characters a window to close in. This could involve setting fires, causing a rockslide, or staging a decoy attack on a distant point.

Scaling from the Blind Side

The eastern cliffs are heavily patrolled, but the mesa's western side is steeper and less accessible. A careful climb from this side, with the right gear and timing, could allow for a stealthy entry through one of the more hidden fissures in the rock. See Climbing the Mesa on page [x] for more information.

Using a Vehicle

If the characters have access to a vehicle, they will be able to approach the mesa much faster. However, there is no hope of approaching the mesa unseen unless they wait for a dust storm (assume that one happens every 1d20 days), cause a distraction, or come up with some other clever plan.

CLIMBING THE MESA

Reaching the mesa is only the first challenge. They will have to scale the mesa. If they somehow manage to reach the mesa's eastern side without being seen, the ropes that the Vultures use may still dangle from the side entrance (Area 2). The characters will still need to use stealth to climb inside, but at least they won't need to make checks to climb.

If the characters can't access the ropes, they must scale the mesa the old-fashioned way. When a character starts climbing on their turn and whenever they start their turn climbing, they will have to make a DC 12 STR (Athletics) check. On a success, they climb their normal movement rate. Otherwise, the character doesn't make any progress. If the character fails their check by 5 or more, they fall, taking 1d6 damage for every 10 feet they fall.

Attack rolls against a climbing character have advantage, and the character's attack rolls have disadvantage. The character also has disadvantage on DEX saving throws made while climbing.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise, the cavern has the following features.

Caverns. The caverns are cramped, with rough stone walls that press close and ceilings hanging low at just eight feet, forcing some to stoop through the narrow passages. Despite the crude surroundings, rugs, and makeshift tapestries hang on the walls, their rich patterns and faded colors offering a twisted sense of luxury amidst the grime. The dim light from flickering torches reveals this attempt at opulence, making the space feel like a mockery of wealth, starkly contrasting the harsh wasteland outside.

New Monsters. This adventure uses many of the monsters found in the Fifth Edition Monster Manual and/or the Tales of the Valiant Monster Vault. New creatures marked with an asterisk are detailed at the end of the adventure.

Firearms. As a post-apocalyptic setting, this many of the NPCs and treasure rewards offer firearms for the characters to take and use. These items are deatiled on the Firearms sidebar.

Firearms

Relics of the crumbling past, firearms are powerful weapons accessible to the characters in this adventure as well as the post-apocalyptic setting of which it is part.

Characters with proficiency in martial weapons also have proficiency with the firearms listed on the Firearms table below.

Properties. Firearms use special ammunition, and some of them have the burst fire or reload property.

Ammunition. A firearm's ammunition is destroyed upon use.

Burst Fire. A weapon that has the burst fire property can make a normal single-target attack, or it can spray a 10-foot-cube area within normal range with shots. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 DEX save or take the weapon's normal damage. This action uses ten pieces of ammunition.

Reload. A limited number of shots can be made with a weapon that has the reload prperty. A character must then reload it using an action or a bonus action (the character's choice).

FIREARMS

FIREARM	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Pistol, automatic	50 gp	2d6 piercing	3 lb.	Ammunition (range 50/150), reload (15 shots)
Revolver	100 gp	2d8 piercing	3 lb.	Ammunition (range 40/120), reload (6 shots)
Rifle, hunting	150 gp	2d10 piercing	8 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/240, reload (5 shots), two-handed
Rifle, automatic	250 gp	2d8 piercing	8 lb.	Ammunition (range 80/240), burst fire, reload (30 shots), two-handed
Shotgun	50 gp	2d8 piercing	7 lb.	Ammunition (range 30/90), reload (2 shots), two-handed
Bullets (10)	3 gp	—	1 lb.	—

Where is the Sky Reaper? Before the characters enter the caverns, roll on the Where is the Sky Reaper? table to determine the **Sky Reaper's** starting position. Unless the characters are particularly careful, he hides and waits for an ambush.

WHERE IS THE SKY REAPER?

D6	LOCATION
1	Fighting alongside the riflemen in Area 2.
2	Hiding among his treasure hoard in Area 5.
3	Waiting in ambush in Area 6.
4	Taking one of his concubines hostage in Area 7.
5	With his Giant Vulture in Area 8.
6	Hidden among the supplies in area 9.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Caverns of the Sky Reaper, as shown on page [x].

1 - Mesa

The top of the mesa is a graveyard of old stone and crumbling concrete, the ruins of buildings long forgotten and half-swallowed by time. Broken walls and twisted metal beams jut out of the cracked ground, offering little shelter for the Dust Vultures who make this desolation their roost. Scattered among the debris are makeshift nests—tattered bedrolls, rusted containers, and piles of scavenged junk where the rest of the gang lurks. In the center of the mesa yawns a wide, dark hole, edges worn smooth by countless feet. The air wafts up from below, carrying with it the stench of smoke and sweat—no doubt a direct path to the Sky Reaper's lair hidden beneath.

1a—Encounter: Dust Vultures. Two **Dust Vultures*** stand between the edge of the mesa and the hole to the caverns.

1a—Feature: Hole. The hole here drops 15 feet down to the caverns' garden, Area 6.

AREA 1 ENCOUNTERS

APL	ENCOUNTER
1–2	2 **Dust Vultures***
3–4	4 **Dust Vultures***
5–7	2 **Dust Vultures*** and 2 **berserkers**
8–10	2 **Dust Vultures*** and 1 **gladiator**

Without a rope, the characters will need a successful DC 10 STR (Athletics) check to climb down.

1b—Encounter: Blood Hawks. A nest of three **blood hawks** gather here. They usually avoid the Dust Vultures but attack anything that comes into their nesting area.

1c—Encounter: Dust Vultures. Three **Dust Vultures*** without their "wings" gather in these old ruins.

1d—Treasure: Canteen. A canteen with half a liter of potable water lies on the ground in the middle of the ruins.

1d—Hazard: Cracked Floor. The **Dust Vultures** know to avoid this area because the ground is close to collapsing. If a creature weighing 50 or more pounds steps into these ruins, the ground collapses. The creature may make a DC 13 DEX saving throw to avoid falling in. The floor, parts of the ruins, and any creature caught in the collapse fall into Area 3, the Sky Reaper's Throne. A creature that falls takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage and lands prone. The debris creates and area of difficult terrain in Area 3.

1e—Hazard: Rocks Fall. Disturbing the ground in these old ruins causes rocks to fall from the next level of the mesa a few feet to the west of them. Whenever a creature enters the area, it must make a DC 10 DEX (Acrobatics) check. On a failed check, rocks tumble into the ruins. Each creature in the area must make a DC 11 DEX save, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

1f—Hazard: Shady Garden. Various cacti grow in this shady passage, serving as food and a water source for the Dust Vultures. A creature that enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in the area must make a DC 10 Dex (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the creature takes 1 piercing damage from the cacti's spines.

1g—Feature: Southern Pass. Characters who find a way onto the mesa from the mesa's blind

CAVERN OF THE SKY REAPER
1 SQUARE = 10 FEET
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TOM CARTOS
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TOM CARTOS

side inevitably emerge here, on the mesa's southern pass.

2 - Cavern Entrance

The cavern mouth yawns open like a jagged wound in the mesa's east face, its rough stone edges barely wide enough to pass through. Standing only six feet in height, it forces most to duck as they enter, but beyond the cramped threshold, the view is expansive. Through the mouth, you can see the vast stretch of the badlands below—an endless wasteland of cracked earth and scattered rocks, with the faded ribbon of the old highway cutting across it. The wind howls through the gap, carrying dust and the faint scent of decay from the desolation beyond.

Encounter: Riflemen. Two **Dust Vulture riflemen*** stand guard here.

AREA 2 ENCOUNTERS

APL	ENCOUNTER
1–2	2 **Dust Vulture riflemen***
3–4	4 **Dust Vulture riflemen***
5–7	2 **Dust Vulture riflemen*** and 1 **gladiator**
8–10	2 **Dust Vulture riflemen*** and 1 **assassin** armed with a hunting rifle

3 - The Sky Reaper's Throne

If the characters triggered the cracked floor hazard from Area 1d, this entire room is covered in debris from above, creating an area of difficult terrain. Additionally, the two women who were here were crushed to death.

AREA 3 TREASURE

APL	TREASURE
1–2	3 turquoise gems (10 gp each)
3–4	3 zircon gems (50 gp each)
5–7	3 tourmaline gems (100 gp each)
8–10	3 blue spinels (500 gp each)

Otherwise, read or paraphrase the following:

The Sky Reaper's throne is a raised platform, crudely constructed from scavenged wood and metal but draped in faded rugs and threadbare pillows to create a semblance of comfort. At his feet, two women sit chained by their ankles, their wrists marked with bruises from struggling against the heavy iron manacles. Despite the hollow fear in their eyes, a flicker of desperate hope appears when they catch sight of you, a silent plea for rescue buried beneath their trembling gaze.

Encounter: Sky Reaper's Concubines. The two women—assuming they are still alive—were locals captured by the Sky Vultures and forced to live as the Sky Reaper's concubines. Breaking their manacles requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. Each set of manacles comes with one key, which the Sky Reaper carries with him. Without the key, a creature proficient with thieves' tools can pick the manacles' lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Manacles have AC 17 and 15 hit points.

Both women are **commoners** who will eagerly join the characters. These women have advantage on attack rolls made against the Dust Vultures and the Sky Reaper.

Treasure: Jewels. If the characters free the women, they show the characters where there is a hidden stash of treasure under the throne's pillows—three pieces of turquoise worth 10 gp each. If the characters don't free the women or they are dead when the characters arrive, the

characters can find the treasure with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

4 - Cave-in

You arrive at a four-way intersection deep within the twisting tunnels. The walls are rough stone, with patches of mold clinging to the damp surface, and the air feels heavy with dust and decay. To the north, the passage is completely blocked by a mass of rubble and shattered rock, remnants of a collapsed tunnel that now lies buried under tons of debris. Jagged stones jut out like broken teeth, making it clear that this route is impassable.

AREA 5 TREASURE

APL	TREASURE
1–2	100 gp, 1,000 sp, and 6 turquoise gems worth 10 gp each
3–4	200 gp, 1,500 sp, and 6 zircon gems worth 50 gp each
5–7	500 gp, 3,000 sp, and 6 tourmaline gems worth 100 gp each
8–10	100 pp, 600 gp, and 6 blue spinel gems worth 500 gp

Encounter: Poisonous Snake. A deadly **POISONOUS SNAKE** hides among the jagged rocks, attacking any creature that comes within 5 feet of them.

5 - Sky Reaper's Hoard

The flickering torchlight reveals a chamber filled with a dazzling array of treasures—a sharp contrast to the grim surroundings of the tunnels. Stacked chests spill over with gold coins that shimmer in the dim light, their surfaces worn and scratched from years of neglect. Glittering gems, some the size of a fist, are scattered carelessly atop piles of rusted armor and tarnished jewelry. Among the riches, weapons of fine craftsmanship rest in makeshift racks—gleaming swords, finely balanced axes, and even a few ancient firearms, polished and primed for use.

MEDALLION MAP

D8	HOOK
1	The Vault of Forgotten Riches: An ancient bunker buried deep beneath the wasteland, rumored to hold pre-apocalypse treasures—gold, rare artifacts, and technology. The medallion's map hints at a hidden entrance disguised within a collapsed ruin.
2	The Tomb of the Last Warlord: A burial site carved into a remote canyon where a legendary warlord was entombed with his wealth and weapons. The map leads to a concealed entrance blocked by a rockslide, untouched by scavengers.
3	The Underground Oasis: A hidden reservoir deep beneath the desert, fed by ancient machinery and surrounded by lush plant life. The map marks the location of an obscure hatch leading down to this rare source of water and life in the desolate wastelands.
4	The Ruined Citadel: The remains of a fortified city lost to time and sandstorms. The map reveals a secret path to bypass traps and sentinels that guard the citadel's inner sanctum, where old-world technology and forgotten knowledge are preserved.
5	The Pit of the Iron Beast: A long-abandoned scrapyard where the remnants of an enormous war machine lay dormant. The map points to a specific sequence of tunnels and hidden chambers beneath the wreckage, where secrets and potentially deadly traps await.
6	The Shrine of the Nine-Sided God: A forsaken temple built by an ancient cult, its location obscured by shifting sands. The map directs travelers to a forgotten cave network leading to the heart of the shrine, where relics of dark power are said to lie in wait.

Encounter: The Caretaker. An elderly woman wielding an ancient sword watches over this area. She has been in the Sky Reaper's service for two decades and is fiercely loyal to him. She uses the **BANDIT CAPTAIN** stat block, but wields a . If the characters freed the concubines from Area 3 or 7, they could convince her to stand down and let the characters pass. However, she will not allow the characters to take any of the Sky Reaper's hoard, no matter how much they try to persuade her.

Treasure: Sky Reaper's Hoard. The Sky Reaper's hoard consists primarily of jewels and ancient coins—there are 100 gp, 1,000 sp, and six turquoise gems worth 10 gp each. There is also a functional European-style longsword and katana (treat it as a longsword, too), as well as two loaded rifles and two loaded pistols (see the sidebar).

Additionally, a medallion made from gold hangs from a hook on the wall. The medallion is worth 10 gp but is worth 100 times that to anyone that realizes its true value (see below).

Development: Medallion Map. If you're looking for an additional adventure hook, the medallion may be a map or part of a map etched onto its surface. Where it leads is up to you, but it could be the starting point of a longer campaign. Use the Medallion Map table below for ideas.

6 - Garden

The hole in the ground in Area 1a leads down to this cactus garden. As such, it is illuminated by sunlight during the day.

> Sunlight pours in from a jagged hole above, casting golden beams that dance across the stone walls. The harsh desert light illuminates a surprising sight—a small oasis of life in the heart of the cavern. Tall cacti with thick, spined arms stand proudly amid clusters of hardy succulents, their fleshy leaves a vibrant green despite the surrounding gloom. The plants seem to thrive in the sandy soil, drawing life from the faint trickle of water that seeps down from cracks in the rock.

Hazard: Cacti. The cacti in the northeastern corner of the room make for a natural hazard. A creature that enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn in the area must make a DC 10 Dex (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the creature takes 1 piercing damage from the cacti's spines.

7 - Harem

> The room is dimly lit by the soft glow of candles, their light flickering across plush pillows and worn rugs that cover nearly every inch of the stone floor. Low, cushioned furniture is arranged in clusters, creating cozy nooks amidst bookshelves crammed with tattered volumes and odd trinkets. The air is thick with the scent of incense, a vain attempt to mask the mustiness of the underground.
>
> In the center, a group of women sit huddled together. Two of them cradle their swollen bellies, exhaustion etched into their faces, while a third gently rocks a baby wrapped in faded cloth. Their eyes flicker with anxiety as they notice your presence. Nearby, a Dust Vulture leans against a wall, his rifle held loosely in his grip. His eyes widen in surprise when he spots you, and without hesitation, he lowers the weapon and raises his hands, palms out, signaling surrender.

Encounter: Concubines. The seven women here (all **COMMONERS**) are all enslaved by the Sky Reaper and serve on his harem. The six without a newborn are prepared to leave and eager to arm themselves to help. The **DUST VULTURE*** with them has long wanted to leave the bandits but hasn't had the guts to himself—as soon as he sees the characters, he offers to lend a hand. The women vouch for him, explaining that he's helped protect them since their capture. If the characters free and arm the women, they have advantage on attack rolls made against the Sky Reaper and any Dust Vultures still loyal to him. The woman with the newborn fears for the safety of her child and refuses to leave.

8 - Giant Vulture Nest

The cavern opens into a wide, low-ceilinged chamber that reeks of decay and old blood. In the center, a large nest of twisted bones, shredded cloth, and dry grasses is piled high, crowned by a hulking, grotesque bird. Its feathers are a sickly red, slick with grime, and giving off a faint, oily sheen in the dim light. Beady red eyes gleam with malevolence as the creature glares at you, its twisted beak snapping open to reveal rows of needle-like teeth. The vulture's mutated form is even more unnerving—its wings are patchy and malformed, and its talons are unnaturally long, digging into the stone floor.

As you approach, it lets out a rasping hiss, a guttural sound that echoes off the walls. The creature shifts its bulk, feathers rustling with a wet, sickening sound, ready to lash out at any who dare come closer.

Encounter: Aeteros. The GIANT VULTURE'S name is Aeteros and it is the Sky Reaper's beloved pet and mount. A hateful thing, it attacks anyone who isn't the Sky Reaper.

9 - Supplies

The narrow cavern is crammed from floor to ceiling with rough-hewn crates and battered barrels, leaving little room to move. The air is thick with the musty scent of old grain and ripe fruit on the edge of spoiling. Stacked haphazardly against the walls, barrels slosh faintly with stored water, their lids sealed tight with rusted metal rings. Baskets of bruised apples, dried meat, and sacks of coarse flour fill every available space, clearly stolen and hoarded with little regard for order. The flickering torchlight reveals rats scurrying between cracks in the stone, feasting on what spills from torn sacks. This is a storeroom of desperation, where necessity outweighs comfort, and the scarcity of the wasteland is preserved in this cluttered, hidden stockpile.

Treasure: Supplies. There is 30 days worth of food and 16 gallons of water along with clothing and random junk stuffed into this passage, all stolen from the highway travelers.

AFTERMATH

Though the journey to breach the mesa is perilous, once inside, the characters face the final challenge: the Sky Reaper and his loyal servants. In the dark, winding tunnels, the battle is fierce but swift. The tyrant's reign ends with a final blow, his blood staining the cavern floor, and the last of his henchmen fall alongside him. The freed women, once bound in chains, now emerge into the light of a new dawn. Word of the characters' heroism spreads like wildfire across the region. In nearby settlements, they're hailed as legends, offered free drinks, and treated with reverence. However, this fame comes with its own burdens. Rival gangs and would-be champions see them as targets, eager to test their mettle. Everywhere they go, the needy seek their aid while whispers of envy and challenge follow them like shadows.

Should they fail to kill the Sky Reaper, he slinks away, wounded and seething with hatred. His defeat only fuels his rage. In the months that follow, he rebuilds, forging dangerous alliances with other warlords and ruthless gangs. A storm of vengeance brews on the horizon, and the region waits with bated breath for the reckoning to come.

And if the characters fall in battle, the badlands take them as they have so many others before. Their bones lie forgotten in the shifting sands, buried beneath the windswept earth, while the Dust Vultures continue their reign of terror, their cries echoing across the desolate wastes. In the end, the wasteland remembers only those who endure. Ω

Dust Vulture — CR 1/4

Medium Humanoid (Any Lineage)

Armor Class 12 (hide)

Hit Points 9

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 12 **Stealth** 12

Senses —

Languages Common

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+0	-1	+2	-1

Glide. So long as the Dust Vulture is equpped with its glider wings and it isn't incapacitated or wearing heavy armor, it can fly up to 5 horizontally for every 1 foot it descends in the air, up to 60 feet, at no movement cost to itself. When it would take damage from a fall, it can use its reaction to reduce the fall's damage to 0.

Pack Tactics. The Dust Vulture has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Dust Vulture's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Javelin. *Melee* or *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage,

Dropped Bomb (1/Day). The Dust Vulture drops an explosive device on a target directly below it. The target must make a DC 12 DEX saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw or half as much on a successful one.

Dust Vulture Rifleman — CR 1/2

Medium Humanoid (Any Lineage)

Armor Class 12 (hide)

Hit Points 9

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 12 **Stealth** 12

Senses —

Languages Common

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+2	+0	-1	+2	-1

Pack Tactics. The Dust Vulture has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Dust Vulture's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 1d4 + 2 piercing damage.

Hunting Rifle. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 80/240 ft. Hit: 11 (2d10 + 2) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Aim. The Dust Vulture gains a +2 bonus to the next attack it makes with its hunting rifle so long as it makes the attack before the end of its turn.

Sky Reaper	CR 4

Medium Humanoid (Any Lineage)

Armor Class 17 (breastplate)

Hit Points 97

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 13 **Stealth** 13

Senses —

Languages Common

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+3	+2	+1	+3	+2

Pack Tactics. The Sky Reaper has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Sky Reaper's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Mulitattack. The Sky Reaper makes two attacks with his revolver.

Revolver. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 40/160 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Nimble. The Sky Reaper takes the Dash, Dodge, or Hide action.